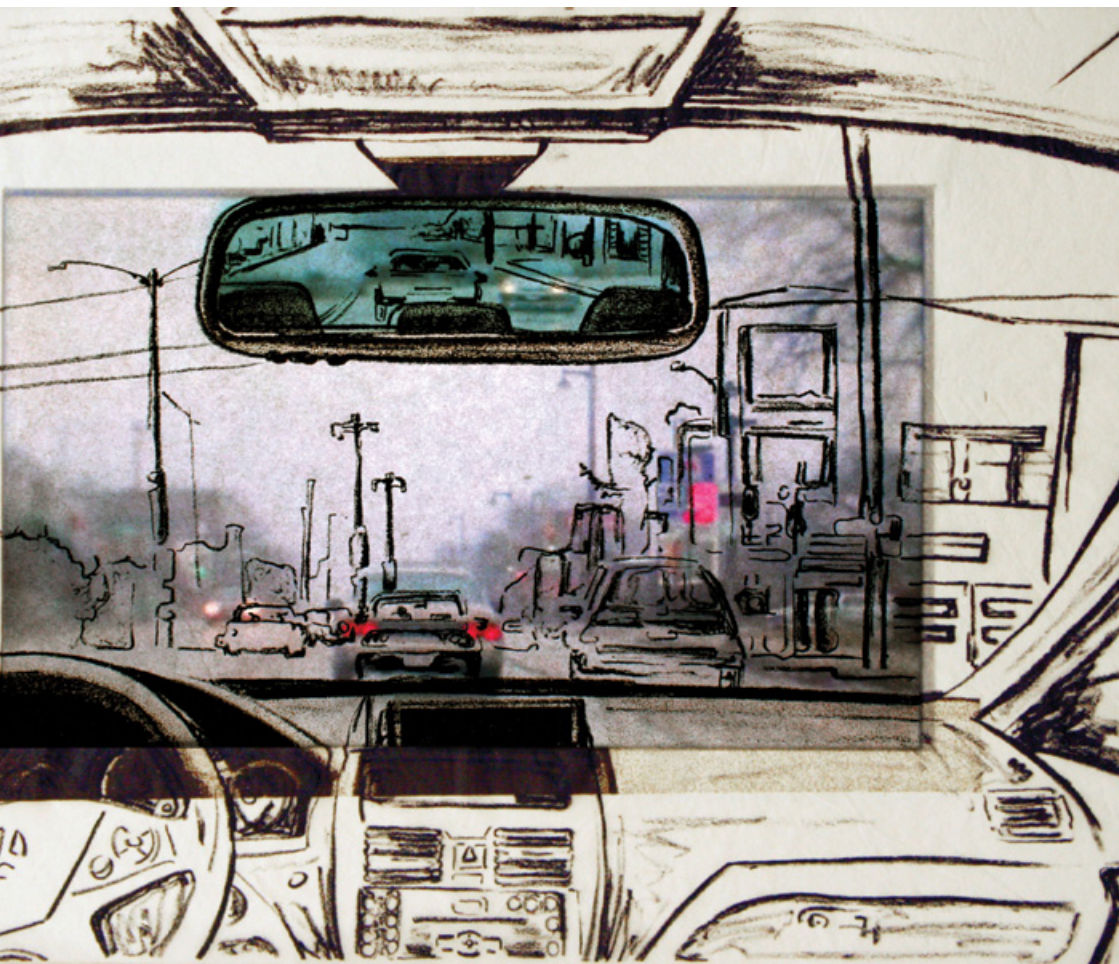


PASSING



BETWEEN

Nathaniel Stern
Jessica Meunick-Groner

ins+img



Jessica Meuninck-Ganger and Nathaniel Stern met at their first University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee Visual Art Faculty Meeting in August 2008, became fast friends, and decided to begin collaborating whilst on a trip to the Milwaukee Zoo with their kids a few months later. Jessica, a trained and practiced printmaker, had a growing interest in new media, time and space, and Nathaniel continued to investigate composite work that lives between the digital and traditional. The ideas behind their *Distill Life* series were necessarily solidified with an invitation to participate on a group show at the now defunct Armoury Gallery, which gifted them with the pressure of a concrete and fast-approaching deadline.

In *Distill Life*, the artists approach both old and new media as form. They permanently mount translucent prints and drawings directly on top of video screens, creating moving images on paper. They incorporate technologies and aesthetics from traditional printmaking - including woodblock, silk screen, etching, lithography, photogravure etc - with the technologies and aesthetics of contemporary digital, video and networked art, to explore images as multidimensional. Their juxtaposition of anachronistic and disparate methods, materials and content - print and video, paper and electronics, real and virtual - enables novel approaches to understanding each. The artists work with subject matter ranging from historical portraiture to current events, from artificial landscapes to socially awkward moments.

Pieces from the *Distill Life* series have been thus far shown in Massachusetts and Wisconsin, and will feature in Richard Noyce's upcoming book, *Critical Mass: Printmaking Beyond the Edge*. This catalogue and DVD accompany *Passing Between*, an exhibition of *Distill Life* works at GALLERY AOP, Johannesburg, South Africa, January/February 2010. The series and collaboration are ongoing.

Thinking-with ...

... Passing Between

by Nicole Ridgway

Lyrical and humorous, mundane and serious, the fourteen works of *Passing Between* reveal equal parts wit and amazement, technical ingenuity and simplicity. In all of the works medium specificity is frayed, conventions of image making and reception are questioned, and flows of power and influence are (literally and figuratively) made transparent. And yet, in its passage between outmoded facture and technological wizardry, the works are lambent, rich, and visually striking.

So, how to think this remarkable collection of assisted readymades that speak to, are inspired by, but stand apart from an avant-garde practice of shock, perturbation and assault. Works that expand our conception of printmaking and digital image making, while nimbly reminding us that art is always made in the margins of other art, is always speaking alongside the world, and works in which there is a love of craft and a celebration of small gestures, that gets little traction in contemporary art talk.

The overall series name of this ongoing collaboration is *Distill Life*. The name is both a lighthearted pun and intimation of the serious curiosity about the nature of the image today that the works enact.

Artist and writer Robert Smithson, in his "crystallography of laughter," describes types of laughter in terms of crystal systems. The "ha-ha crystal" taxonomy helps us, he asserts, understand the "fourth



The Gallerist, 2009
lithograph, LCD with machinima
280 x 255 mm

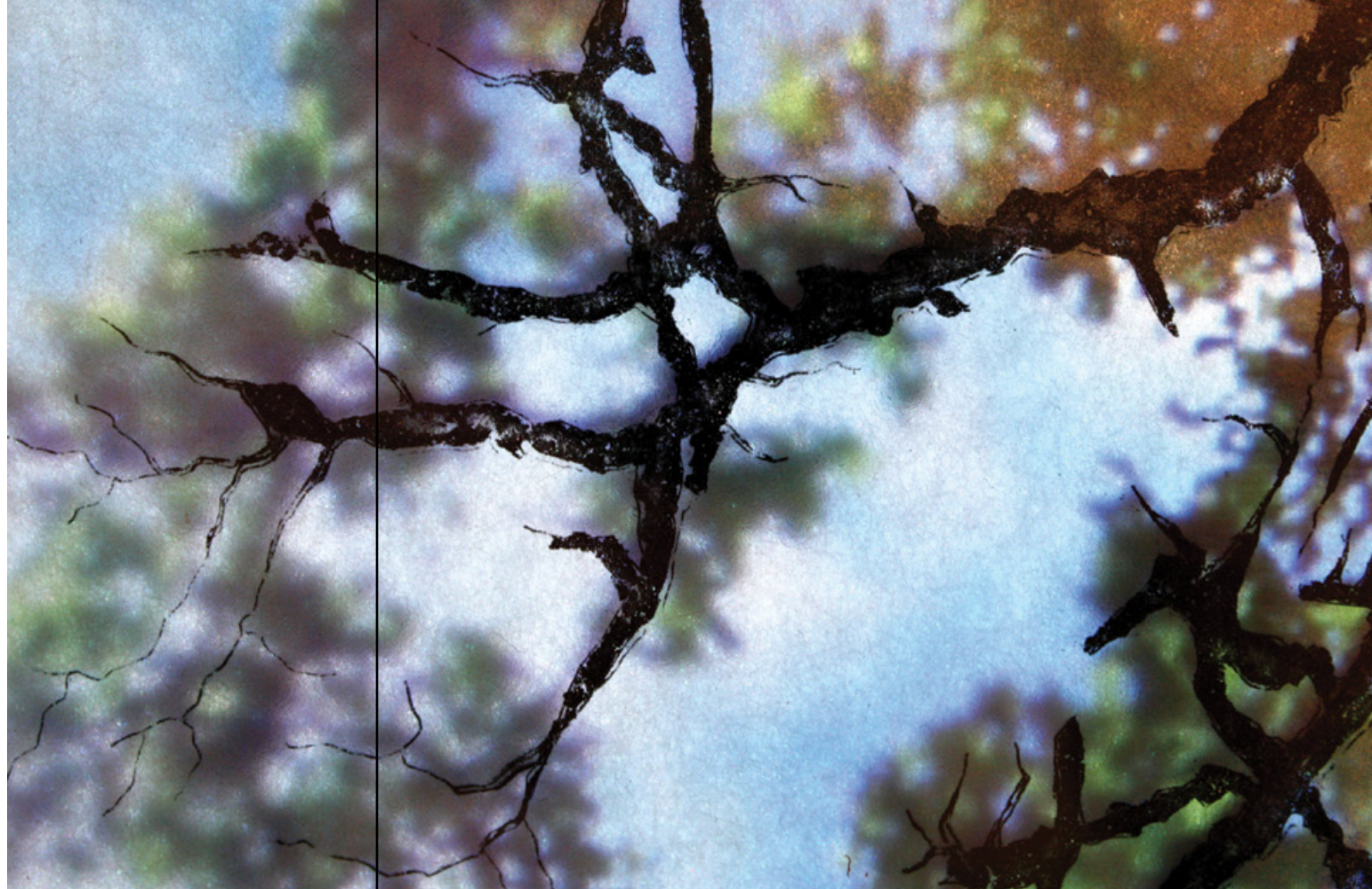
dimensional nature" of a work. Laughter is then no "laughing matter," but is rather the "matter-of-laughs."¹

We move from the insider belly laugh of *The Gallerist*, starring New York gallery owner, author and blogger of the contemporary upheaval in the arts, Ed Winkleman, as a monochrome copy of himself adrift in an ocean of vibrant machinima sharks, to a cow that flies through the air to meet and miss itself in *Twin City*, providing an uneasy giggle of recognition that punctures the spectacle of the news in its aggregation and aggrandizement of catastrophe; from the proprioceptive sigh of joy as we are invited to give thanks for trees, for light, for jumping on benches in *The Great Oak*, to the nuanced levity of the studio assistant located at the site of

the original's handmaidens and dwarf in *Meninas*. The matter-of-laughs infuses these works, making them evanescent and pensive.

And while the matter-of-laughs adds this fourth dimension to the work, it also makes the work useless, so to speak. We are invited to engage, to chuckle, to pay attention, to be distracted, and in this, are offered time rather than ways to spend it. This ludic invitation to time and curiosity, to digression and focus, to rendezvous and departure, makes for works that are charming in Magritte's sense. In his break with Breton, Magritte claims both that art should let the eye see thought and that it must "awaken what is left in us of the instinct to pleasure."² Work without stridency is still, he says, essential to the transformation of art/subject/world.

Underbrush (detail), 2009
etching, sugarlift, LCD with
video + machinima
280 x 255 mm



Passing Between awakens our instinct to pleasure and to thought in its gentle dismantling of categories and convention. In their playfulness and affect (here the matter-of-faiths), Jessica Meuninck-Ganger and Nathaniel Stern invite us to think otherwise, to engage in a thinking-*with*. Their works recollect something beyond themselves, expose us to the not-yet possibilities of the media they deploy, address us with intimacy and let us stand back.

The thoughts posed in this essay consider *Passing Between* as offering us – by passing through, passing away, passing on, passing between – the almost imperceptible processes of the disorientating passage of the between: be it between artwork and spectator, past and present, or print and video. This passing enfolds us in the vicissitudes of time and space, of other stories and our own, not as in the between of two extant entities, but as of the relation of the between of the two. The passage between mark and motion, pixel and line, is not merely a transport that moves us from one already constituted thing to another.

In trying to think what these works set in motion, what they mark and make perceptible, as they pass between spatial and temporal registers, I start with an analogy, a figure to think with.

... Membranes

Each of these works forms a membrane in that they are both a joining of two things (at least) and the permeability between them. The works form a fold of resistance and circulation, a “both/and” rather than an “either/or”, passing between the analogical/digital, outmoded/emergent, printed/drawn, real/virtual, still image/moving image,

hand/eye, public/private, dispersed/shared, and so on.

The membrane is non-place; it is space in motion, time as a mark, a lamina of hand and machine. The membrane allows for diffusion, for passage and separation. The carefully worked paper (and, etymologically, “membrane” finds its roots in fine parchment) and the light of the moving images create a

pellicle through which we can see, but its translucency is rendered tactile with fiber and ink; and this draws attention to our seeing, reminding us that seeing and touch, sense and feeling, are a passage too.

In *Underbrush* we see, as if standing under a tree, a branch reaching above us in the immediate foreground, dark, denuded, still, a branch in winter



Floating Worlds, 2009
woodcut, LCD with video
460 x 660 x 75 mm

perhaps. But via the membrane of the paper and light, we also see the tree awash in leaves, gently rustling against a kinetic sky. Through time-lapse photography the clouds speed by (an entire afternoon in an instant), but we stand still (as if below the tree looking up), and time seems to catch its breath as the branch and its foliage meet up and then move on, meet up and then move on, in an eternal loop. Although bright, the color palette of the video images is muted and seemingly out of focus (all the more so against the material insistence of the printed branch) and the light is diffracted but somehow also saturated. The lines of the print settle strangely as a before and as a lingering after the fact, as both what was and what will be. Like a membrane,

Underbrush makes time vibrate, a sort of moving standstill that opens up the threshold of the now to go in any direction it chooses, or none at all.

Prints are a material memory that, Smithson argues, is exhausted. Their exhaustion however does not mean that they are dead, but rather that they are “residues of a passage.”³ And video, argues Raymond Bellour, has the capacity to act as passage between all art forms.⁴ Encountered as membrane, prints and video are “in-between” media that remember all media are forever becoming unlike themselves; as they are always already traces of our passing through the world, transitional moments, like so many of the works here, filled with comings and goings.

Passing Between conceives of media in their interstices, as interstices, played out across an array of surfaces that create dimensionality without depth. It enacts a complex “sampling” of different image modes, acknowledging that print and screen are irrevocably enmeshed with surfaces.

... Surfaces

Here the surface is paratactical – an arrangement of “phrases” placed side by side without subordination. Narrative nomads are held together only by an “and” without an emplotment of antecedent and consequent, cause and effect. As such, surfaces require that the viewer complete them, that we take the time to tell them. As a membrane between mark and motion, surfaces do not then work as a “boundary isolating the purity of art” (as for the modernists). They are rather “a place of slippage between various spaces” and temporalities.⁵

This slipping (here as moments of meeting and hesitating between mark and motion) reveals how the surface of the media screen need not be monumentalized or made architectural. It interrupts the ubiquity of screens, and the ways in which surface as simply the scene for projection has become so normative in contemporary video art.

Ruth Peltzer-Montanda asserts that one of the hallmarks of print media is its flatness – a signifier of the reproducibility

that printing presses offer. Although prints have a tangible and tactile quality, their flatness has been read in opposition to painting surfaces, which are seen as richer than that of print.

As the technologies of print and computer media continue to intersect and merge, the question of the surface has flared again. There is a supposed “uniformity of the surface” or “enervation” of digital prints in comparison to traditional and more “visceral” forms of printmaking.⁶

But, as Richard Shiff reminds us, the perception of the materiality of the surface changes. Today, unlike in the heyday of modernism, the mechanical surface of the print can appear rich and textured as new digital image making technologies evolve. New materials, Schiff asserts, “unmask the imperfections” of old ones; but in this “touch returns.”⁷ Older print technologies induce a “micro-haptics” as an excess of surface, or surface in excess. In *Passing Between*, this surface in excess is brought together with the optical excess of surface that is digital video (especially in the machinima footage – video captured from virtual worlds such as *Second Life*). *Passing Between* flaunts the proximity of enervated and visceral surfaces, and recalls the historical and relational quality of the perception of surface.

In *Floating Worlds* an enormous samurai-like thief – scabbard and grasping hand looming in the centre of the image –



The Great Oak (detail), 2009
giclée print, LCD with video
495 x 495 x 50 mm



The Great Oak, 2009
giclée print, LCD with video
495 x 495 x 50 mm

surface and letting it linger,"⁸ our gaze (as touch and look) is invited to explore, wander, settle, or not. Our looking is not preempted, and in moving between the "and" ... and ... "and" the story becomes ours to tell. We translate the play of associations; infer the situation from the surface effects; and, begin and end our stories when we arrive or leave.

... Lines

makes off with a plastic bag of fragile, luminescent jellyfish, treasure indeed. Created through multiple printing blocks on paper worked with varnish, and applied to painted wood and the screen with tweaked adhesives, the printed image emphasizes the translucence of the fish and the darkness of their underwater world. The cropped image of the thief is largely white with only a few lines to gesture to fold and texture. What detail there is (slashes of black, the sword and the translucent paper over the screen) draws attention to the humorous juxtaposition and to the moving jellyfish that momentarily coincide with their drawn selves and then move on, refulgently floating by, and out of the frame.

Here the purposively enervated print activates the visceral video, and the video in turn complicates the surface of the print. The nested images do not speak to hidden depths, something behind the image that is its truth, although they do speak of depths. By "returning the image to the fragility of its

Passing Between rehearses and recollects the beginning of all pictorial form in the point that sets itself in motion. "A line is a dot that went for a walk" is how Paul Klee memorably described the artistic process. His keen awareness of time led him to identify movement (and rest) as integral to the metamorphosis of the actual. Lines, thicker and thinner, depict transparent overlapping planes rather than volume created through contrasts of light and shadow. In this way, for example, landscape stops being a static space and becomes a space to be moved in, walked across, in actuality and imagination.

Whether digital or artisanal, pencil or pixel, all images "mark a surface differential,"⁹ and here, the passing between media does something that neither can do alone. The digital manipulation of images now leaves a material trace of its process, and the spatial arrangements of the print gain

complexity through the introduction of duration and horizontal extension.

A rich digital image of a massive towering oak cross fades into itself as a drawing. Photograph and ink emerge out of each other, separating as the drawn aspects of the tree approach the embedded screen of the photo frame. On the screen two men run beneath the tree, jumping across benches drawn and actual, giving themselves over to the joy of the day. They lift their arms as if in praise of the tree, seemingly abandoning themselves to the tree, becoming tree. The long kozo fibers of the unryu paper and the marks of the drawing give the screen texture, while the video augments the translucency of the paper and shimmer of the digital photograph.

The Great Oak passes between video loop and digital image becoming print image, pixel becoming line becoming color. The digital here is not used to simulate the cinematic or photographic more economically; instead, pixel and pencil are shown to be the transformational points that they are, points that go for a walk and take the image plane with them.

The work is a light-hearted nod to the trees of the great European master of everyday realism, Van Eyck, to Monet the master of light, and to Jim Campbell who made one of the first attempts at moving prints (photogravure and LEDs - Light-Emitting Diodes); and it is a wink to the place of trees (actual and figurative) in epistemology and theology.

Keep to the Path (detail), 2009
photo etching, LCD with video
280 x 255 mm



In *Keep to the Path* seven stills capturing different moments from a video were worked together in Photoshop and then turned into a photopolymer etching, which was then laid back over the original video. This video is also a loop inside of itself, the same women appearing on-screen on the right well before they disappear down the path on the left. The etching captures in

outline one woman stopping on the path in a public garden to point out something that catches her eye in the verdant growth, rendered in the etching more as a smudge of black than as an illustration. Her figure stands close to the only other clearly drawn element, a sign that announces, "Keep to the Path". The opalescent hues of pinks, purples and whites on the clothes of

the walkers, and the greens of the gardens, bleed through the paper and the etching. Here the video acts as the color block in the printing process. The video image of the woman momentarily lines up with her etched outline and it seems to hesitate for an instant before moving on. In the intervals between her convergences with herself, her finger draws us back to the instant of seeing,

the spectator becomes her companion, walking alongside and having our attention called to something.

Hesitation allows for affect, a delay in conscious thought that gives the body time to remember feeling and itself. In the pause, the stuttering between to which *Keep to the Path* returns, our seeing practices remember our



bodiliness, remember the perspectives of others who see, their bodies, spaces and times. The loop of the video paused, but not stopped, by the sign, "Keep to the Path," layers the path taken with a path that could be taken, and a path that wasn't taken. The complex intermingling of the present and the expectant (when will she meet herself again?), remembers, strangely, in future anterior tense: what will have happened is not fixed in the now or the then.

Lines – dots that went for a walk – are akin to footprints, vestiges that mark that something or someone has passed through. They are not fragments that speak to a lost or not-yet whole, they are traces that mark matter with time and time as mattering. They mark the unidentifiable movement of appearances and disappearances - they reactivate the past, but do not heal its ambivalence.

In the diptych *Twin City* a deliberately artificial landscape (computer generated forms lacking in any attempt to render them real) literalizes this movement of appearance and disappearance. It holds open the immediate past that inspired the work – the tornado that hit the Twin Cities in 2009 – and the long-ago history of lithography and news in the Midwest. Although largely forgotten today, this work returns us to the roots of printing in Milwaukee, where Stern and Meuninck-Ganger are based. It infers a past in which Milwaukee was a centre for news lithography and locus of the panorama craze in the nineteenth century. Milwaukee printers were used to illustrate newsworthy events so that, prior to photography,

readers could see what they could not actually see, to travel virtually, so to speak. Like the panorama paintings (and later photographs) that were all the rage, images from elsewhere become available to all. And, like the play on first and "second" life here, the piece travels between the first and second frame, between technologies of popular image sharing and art, between silliness and awe.

... Loops

Two key aesthetic strategies – sampling and looping – "disclose how video art endowed with historical awareness provides a sense of futurity to the image."¹⁰ Both contemporary strategies speak to the history of video art (its fascination with extendedness and repetition) and change it; the phenomenology shifts from the artist to the viewer who becomes the locus of extension. Without origin or telos, the loop allows spectators to start their story where they encounter the work and end it when they leave. In this, the loop interweaves the work's time with the spectator's as rhythm rather than succession.

Digital video was always destined to be incorporated with other media, opening up the possibilities at play in the meeting of temporal and non-temporal materials. The dominant experimentations thus far, however, have seen it enabling the "expanded cinema of spectacle"¹¹ or working in projection. *Passing Between*, rather, speaks back to another trajectory (not as often taken) within the history

previous, *Twin City*, 2009
lithograph, LCD with
machinima, computer
405 x 460 mm each (diptych)

Kinnickinnic (detail), 2009
lithograph, LCD with video
255 x 355 x 50 mm



of video art - to the materiality of video technologies, to video decollage and video sculpture, for example.

In *Kinnickinnic*, the viewer is placed in the first person point of view of cinema (and games) from the perspective of being behind the wheel of a car as it moves down a street. *Kinnickinnic* remembers early back projection technology in cinema (and the distance from then to the technical effects computers have enabled today) but revels in the artistry of that fakeness, most clearly seen in the intimations of color in the video that appear here like ink stains on paper.

Kinnickinnic is a major avenue in the city of Milwaukee, taking you past the port and through the older sections of the city towards the highway and airport. Kinnickinnic is also the name of one of the three rivers that flow into Lake Michigan and give Milwaukee its name (the meeting of the waters), as well as being an Ojibwa word that literally means "what is mixed." These layers of

association are replicated in the layers of the work: the lithograph of the car interior; the moving images through the windscreen and rearview mirror; the way both moving images mirror one another but don't – the cars in the mirror move up behind and then around and are in front of us; the drawn elements that leave the frame and literally drive across the gallery walls making the work both specific to Milwaukee, and to the place in which it is shown.

Through the loop the work travels on and on, and through the sample, the specificity of the original site of the work is re-contextualized to the specific site in which it is shown. The work is embedded in both the history of its taking place and the moment of its viewing. This both/and is iterated in the both/and of the camera lens that captures the image of the world, and the window through which the artists show us the world. These two modes of representation have been central to Western image making from the Renaissance up to Microsoft's Windows.

Meninas, 2009
(full image and detail)
etching, aquatint, LCD
with video
710 x 480 x 75 mm



In *Meninas*, capturing and showing are brought together again to explore their tension and inseparability. Like the famous painting it cites and updates, *Meninas* passes between different technologies of seeing and ways of making visible, and between the spectator's seeing and being seen in their seeing.

The print, treated with wax to allow its line to be light and almost invisible, traces aspects of Velasquez's famous *Las Meninas* onto its surface, but with subtle differences: here is the canvas, the dog, the windows and the mirror; the light that provides the illusion of depth; the artist in the frame; the sagittal lines that emerge from the back and move to the front of the image; and, the empty square that allows the gaze of the viewer to meet the spectacle of the tableaux and the spectacle to look back at the viewer. However, the enervated lines disarm the illusion of depth; the light here is only the literal light from the nested video screen; the image in the mirror is of an absent camera, tripod and computer; the figures in the tableaux are replaced by the artists dancing on set; the sagittal lines are

literalized as the artists run towards the viewer and then move out of the frame; and, as the artists see Velasquez and the spectator, we see the original and the new version here, and we see ourselves being seen by both.

Las Meninas images pictorial representation, and critics have noted that it anticipated Daguerre in its portraiture, and, given that the figures look back at us, it looks, to twentieth century eyes, like a snapshot. "The light and shadow-filled space is not only intended for the viewer's eyes [but also] for the viewer's body. The size of the figures is a match for our own. This appeal at once to eye and to body is a remarkable pictorial performance."¹²

The work embraces but holds in tension two modes of representation, each of which constitutes the relationship between the viewer and the picturing of the world differently. The first is conceived to be like a window; the artist positions himself on the viewer's side of the picture surface and looks through the frame to the world, which he then reconstructs by means of the conventions of linear perspective.



Danger (detail), 2009
 screenprint, LCD with
 video + machinima
 340 x 405 mm

This is seen most clearly in *Danger*, a seemingly light work that uses footage of two children (the artists') swimming in Lannon Quarry. Formerly a stone quarry that has filled with rainwater to become a lake, the "lake" and its "beach" are now a park to which Wisconsinites flock in the short summer months. While this history of the industrial scarring and reclamation of the landscape is not evident in the image, the combination of the footage, the drawn signs, and the machinima hummingbird, as well as the play with perspective and plane, frame and figure, conjure up a layering of time and place, technology and everyday life, personal and collective memory.

The second mode is more like a mirror and a lens – an image of the world casts itself, as through a camera obscura, onto a surface. The artist of the first kind claims that "I see the world" while that of the second shows that the world is "being seen".¹³

Meninas revisits these two modes of picturing the world/spectator relationship and, in its use of the digital picture frame, gestures to the rapidly

changing relationship of spectator to image, of portrait to snapshot, of intimate to social, of visible to invisible.

Line and pixel, past and present, art and snapshot, supplement one another, and the hacked LCDs (Liquid Crystal Displays) of *Passing Between* become object transformers in the sense that they draw attention to the photo frame (and all of its kitsch, commercial, private, mundane

inferences), and to the interweaving of loss and plenitude they embody. While digital media are time forms, in the physical manifestation of the frame, they also engage memory. They literally have a capacity for "memory" (storage and erasure), to capture the instant (and wipe it). Memory and forgetfulness - transposed here onto the very mediality of the works - are always more than personal affect, are always real and virtual.

In a scene filled with the innocence of children at play against a backdrop of trees, the sign "Danger" is ironically literalized in the foreground. A drawn buoy, tethered to an unseen anchor, sits unmoving in the middle of the lake; the water brushes up against it, but it remains static. The hummingbird oddly stares at the virtual camera that captured it, and thus looks back at us until a boy enters the scene and "scares" it off.

The children move in and out of the frame while the camera stays fixed in position. The camera violates cinematic convention (no pans or cuts or tilts) thereby drawing attention to itself. The figures loom large, interrupting the spatial orientation of the scene and disorienting the conventions of perspective.

As assisted readymades (in both their print and video aspects) the works in *Passing Between* are in one sense an archive of the reproducible in mass culture, and in another, are what Hal Foster calls the "anarchival."¹⁴ These images draw attention to incomplete exchanges and to the "made up" aspect of memory and the real, to a certain deterritorialization of reference.

Running Man, for example, captures, via a virtual camera, a series of images of an avatar running across a virtual world. The work abandons perspective and severs vision from its location in a human observer, presenting in its stead a mix of human and machinic vision in various iterations across seven frames. *Running Man* updates and honors the long-held fascination with capturing human movement (from Muybridge to Duchamp to Kentridge).

Made up of three videos and four prints, the work fragments out the collage within and across multiple frames and

Running Man, 2009
lithograph, giclée prints,
LCDs with machinima
polyptych of 4 prints and 3 screens
installation size varies





The Multiple (full image and detail), 2009
woodcut, chine-collé, LCD with machinima, computer
405 x 460 mm each (diptych)

perspectives: adding aspects of chine collé to moving machinima images; turning stills from the video into giclée and litho prints; presenting the viewer with multiple views of the same man running across an impossible and beautiful landscape; shifting between the long shot and the close up but in different frames. In all, it is the viewer who animates the whole.

The technique of distributed collage is picked up again in *The Multiple*, here moving between frames to extend and bracket the image as well as the frame itself. The paper is attached to the

box screens so that it curls up at the edges, sitting on them uneasily, drawing attention to their sculptural aspect. The light from the screens enhances the fibers of the paper, while the paper makes the hand-painted screens a material part of the work. The images of boats and the pillar come directly from Hiroshige, the master of woodcut and the use of color; but here color comes from the machinima footage and not the print, while the dark shadowy birds that move across the screens seem to belong to both. Multiples multiply in and between the two screens, iterating and doubling, and moving across one another.

... Citations

Quotations - Hiroshige in *The Multiple*, Velasquez in *Meninas*, and more - saturate the works in this exhibition. They layer, as the works themselves layer, resonance and time, affect and history. Perhaps most recognizable, *The Great Wave* is a citation (also an homage: it honors and recognizes a debt) of Hokusai's extraordinary woodcut from around 1831, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*.

Hokusai is invoked here to remember that art is an exchange and an encounter, but that it is also an obligation and a celebration. Hokusai lived just as Japanese and Western powers/ideas/artifacts were beginning to rub up against each other. Despite the fact that he worked in a period in which contact with Western culture

was initially forbidden, he discovered and studied the European copperplate engravings that were being smuggled into the country (ironically, often as wrappings for other goods). From this he began to transform his use of color and introduced elements of perspective into his ukiyo-e pieces, and he altered the Dutch style of landscape painting through flattening and the use of color surfaces as a pictorial element. The only thing constant across his prolific output was the convention of ignoring shadows, perhaps because they would have obstructed the racing of his line and the delicate staining of his inks through the diaphanous tissue of the mulberry paper.

It was an unsettling time, and Hokusai's themes and styles and persona convulse like his fishermen, warriors, birds, trees, and boats. As in *The Great Wave*, where tiny humans are tossed around under giant waves, while an enormous



Mt. Fuji is merely a hill in the midst of a thundering seascape. The waves form a frame through which we see the mountain in the distance, and the impending crash of the massive wave in the foreground adds tension to narrative.

To Westerners, this woodblock seems to be the quintessential Japanese image, yet it's quite un-Japanese. Many critics argue that it is actually a Western painting, seen through Japanese eyes. And many of his contemporaries agreed, dismissing Hokusai as something of a graphic buffoon. But by the 1880's, Japanese prints were all the rage in the West; in particular, Hokusai's prints (along with those of Hiroshige) were studied by many artists, most famously

the Impressionists in the shadow of the crisis caused by photography and film. *Japonisme* had returned European print (inexorably altered) to European printing/painting.

In *The Great Wave*, Stern and Meuninck-Ganger layer two woodcuts (one each for the waves and the tower) and chine collé (for the boats) with footage of machinima waves that lap against a shore and a bright, atmospheric, sky. The time-lapse clouds against the sun form the background that bleeds through into the foreground; the waves gently meeting the shore form the middle ground, and an enormous wave with its foamy fingers seems ready to crash into a tower in the foreground (this



The Great Wave, 2009
(full image and detail)
woodcut, LCD with video
305 x 355 mm

tower is not Japanese, but the Hillbrow Tower, a visual symbol of Johannesburg).

The work makes obvious the obvious but concealed discursivity of all art practices, and of the influence of popular culture and technology on how artists think and make. It reminds us that art (even when not appropriative) is an ongoing series of intertexts, palimpsests and genealogies, with ongoing practices of copying, collaging and citing (both in content and technology, as the digital is always already a citation in its code).

Citations mark the original context but bracket its truth-value, engendering

new meanings in new contexts in a way that disturbs the surface of the present. In the words of Walter Benjamin, quotations "are like robbers by the roadside who make an armed attack and relieve the idler of his convictions."¹⁵ In our context, the idler would be the artist, the art historian, and the spectator, who thinks she can conceive of the world and the past as outside of her present. Citation reminds us that the past, like the languages of art and techniques of image making, belong to no one, but they support the possibility of image making today. Quotations bring the outside into touch with the inside by creating a detour in the usual relation of

outside to inside, and they do so without making their disjunctive conjunction a false unity or synthesis.

Citations do not work through description and exegesis, but instead they function via ostension: they show themselves to be citations. As Benjamin rather disingenuously states:

I have nothing to say. Only to show. I will steal nothing valuable and appropriate no brilliant formulations. But the rags, the refuse: my intention is not to make an inventory of these things but to allow them, in the only possible way, to fulfill their existence – by making use of them.¹⁶

Quotations show the show of themselves, and they show the artists seeing, being viewers like us. Quotations are not authentic fragments from the past nor testimonials to what has been; they are the passing between a not-anymore, a never-was, and a not-yet, a marking (not a modeling) of other possibilities in the now that might have been, or become otherwise than they are. Like the anachronisms that abound in this work, citations suspend the seemingly endless present of a presentism buttressed by the myth of progress and ever emerging newness.

... Anachronism

Passing Between is awash in ravishing anachronisms (the plastic bag in the hands of the samurai in *Floating Worlds*, the scroll bar in place of the ideograms in *The Multiple* and the unryu paper brought

together with Second Life forms, to name just a few). The works all deliberately expose their anachronisms, exploiting the gap that is opened in the misplacement of objects, styles, geographical and historical categories, genres and disciplines, to show a time that is out of joint and matter that is out of place. By bringing together discrepant times and places they configure time and space as connections and dispersals, and evoke moments of laughter and recognition.

Anachronism gently and surprisingly recalls the global circulation of images and techniques, and the ethical questions that abound in the Western absorption of other art-making practices, but remembers, too, that this is not a one-way street.

In these film objects, or moving prints, medium itself is an anachronism. As both video and print, as the passage and membrane between, the viewer is exposed to the lack of fit, and an exploration of that lack of fit, in time and space. The doubly displaced condition of the anachronistic means that these objects and styles or media are not to be securely located in the past, from whence they might be resurrected to 'redeem' our present, but lodged, rather, in some perpetually fictionalized version of an outdated future, which never happened, and around which time has grown strange.

Anachronism creates a hiatus in which the past returns to supplement the future, passing between missed encounters in the past and unfinished encounters in the present.

... Ellipses

My wish has been to accompany, to think alongside and in relation to this work, passing between, so to speak, the work and this thinking, and the thinking of the work, and what passes me by. Here I am writing in proximity to the work and by means of it, and as Jean-Luc Nancy says in a different context, "There is something of an ellipsis in this proximity" and "the proximity lies in this ellipsis."¹⁷

A series of marks, the "... " to indicate omission or pause, the figure of the ellipsis speaks firstly to the movement between text and work, between screen and print, between pixel and line; and then, to the movement between past and present, to the interruption of chance and the possibility of the accidental; and finally, it performs (formally, visually, epistemologically), like these works, a space of suspension and opening to time.

So my thinking-with ends with the ellipsis (although they are there all along), a figure to think the entanglement of mark and motion. Much of the work of *Passing Between* seeks to suspend the distinction between practices of mark-making and moving images, for example, of monotype and video.

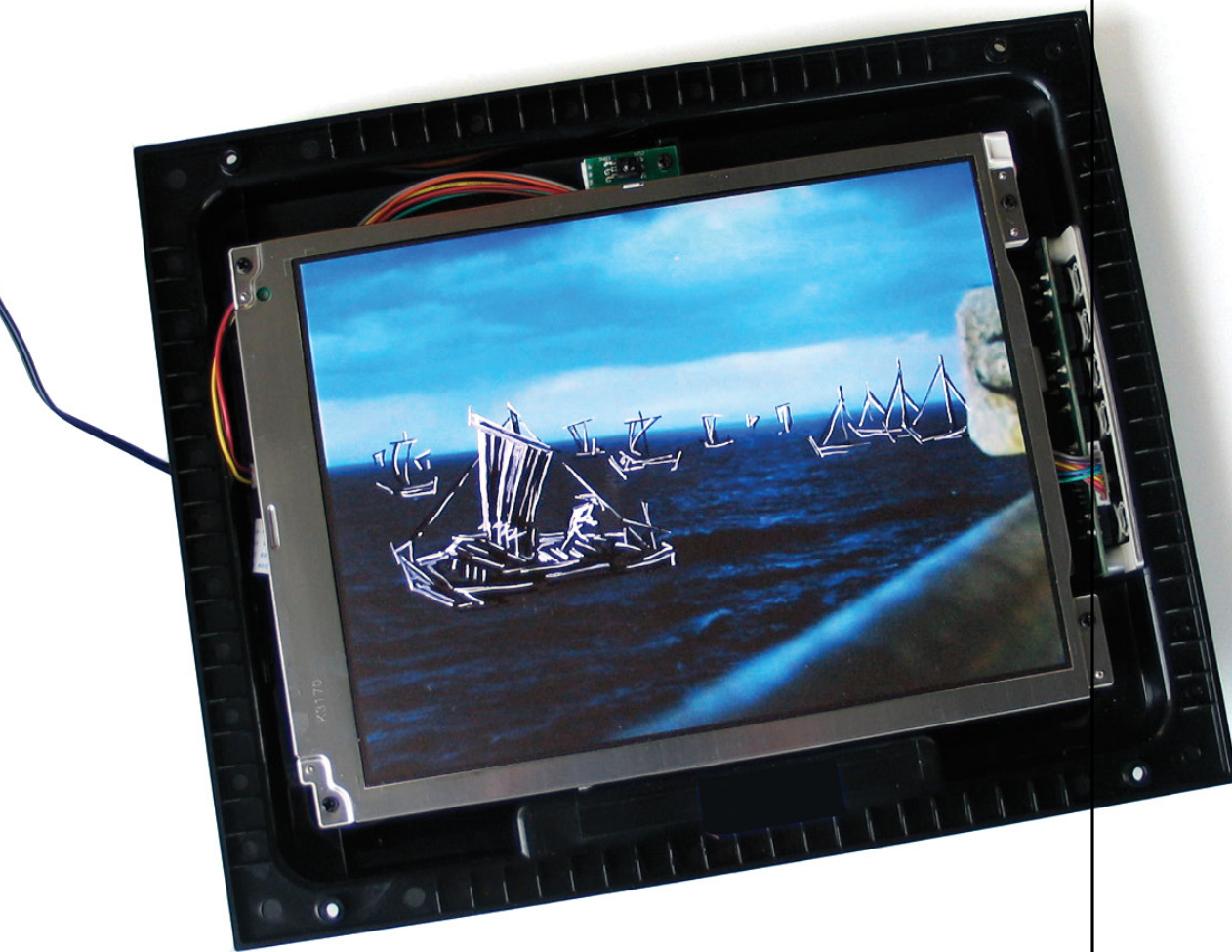
Playfully called *Monovids*, *At Sea* (boats) and *At Sea II* (serpent) speak to the both/and (pause and conjunction, stutter and rendezvous) of two seemingly distinct media. Part of an ongoing series of works (in which the moving water will

recur), both *At Sea* boat and serpent (my distinctions for ease of recognition) re-assemble and displace monotype and video. More than a neologism, *Monovid* is also a catachresis.

In rhetoric, strictly speaking, a catachresis is a figure of association in which an outlandish comparison is made between two dissimilar things. It is an abuse of language. But its incongruity can also carve a conceptual niche for something for which there are no names. It identifies something identifiable in no other way, sinuously and strangely bringing together, in this case, two art's practices to denote the advent of something without designation in conventional art's discourse, yet, or, perhaps, ever.

A catachresis is a trope of displacement that abuses the order of things (the taxonomy of practices, or the specification of media, or chronologies of movements) and in that, as Foucault tells us, it alters the order of things, reminding us of the incompleteness of all classificatory, historical, or medium specific distinctions. The *Monovid* moves between (nomadically) and brings together (elliptically) the most painterly of printmaking techniques with the most mundane of video screening technologies.

The "printed drawing" in which ink or paint is applied directly to a smooth surface and then pressed onto paper is unique in the print repertoire as it makes editioning almost impossible. It has appealed to artists for generations because of its simplicity, the possibilities



At Sea (process image), 2009
Monovid: LCD with video,
Sharpie paint marker
305 x 355 mm

for chance effects, and for capturing translucent light. Monotypes have always been a locus of experimentation.

Like the hacked digital photo frame, monotypes can be made without expensive tools, and here details taken from historical prints and images are rendered in Sharpie paint marker, the simplest of mark-making tools. These images were drawn directly onto the screen while the undulating waves moved behind. The deep blue of the rolling ocean is footage shot from the deck of a contemporary liner whose railing is foregrounded in a reference to Hiroshige's lines that cut across the front of his images, while the woodcut-like boats and serpent recede to the horizon.

Passing Between is reconfiguring the thinkable of both print and video, reframing our perception of their possibilities; joyfully and lightly drawing attention to the way boundaries are drawn, rethinking binaries and the distribution of the visible; and, reminding us that spectatorship is never a passivity that must be turned into an activity – we (the spectators) are always the storytellers and, thus, actors of the works. Together, *Passing Between* and spectator make a new idiom. The ellipses here mark the advent of meaning in the passing between the viewer and the work, between the private and the shared, and remind us again, as Duchamp did in his readymades, that spectators are always also a dispersal of intimacies in their encounters with art.

Footnotes

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At Sea II, 2009
Monovid: LCD with video,
Sharpie paint marker
255 x 405 mm



Jessica Meuninck-Ganger is a Milwaukee-based artist. Her prints, artist's books, and large-scale mixed media works have been exhibited regionally, nationally and internationally. Her works on paper and books are included in several private collections and publications, as well as in portfolios owned by the Weisman Museum of Art and the Target Corporation. She's received numerous residencies and fellowships, and has instructed various printmaking courses and workshops. Jessica received her MFA in Studio Arts from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 2004. She is currently the Printmaking Area Head at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Nathaniel Stern is an experimental installation and video artist, net.artist, printmaker and writer. He has held solo exhibitions at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johnson Museum of Art, Museum of Wisconsin Art, University of the Witwatersrand, and several commercial and experimental galleries worldwide. International showings include the Venice Biennale, Sydney Museum of Contemporary Art, South African National Gallery, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, International Print Center New York, Milwaukee Art Museum and the Modern and Contemporary Art Center (Hungary). Recent features on Nathaniel's work can be seen in the *Leonardo Journal of Art, Science and Technology*, *NY Arts* and *Art South Africa* magazines, *Rhizome.org*, *PBS.org*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Guardian UK* and *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.



cover: *Kinnickinnic*, 2009
 lithograph, LCD with video
 255 x 355 x 50 mm

inside cover and left:
Running Man (details), 2009
 lithograph, giclée prints,
 LCDs with machinima
 polyptych of 4 prints and 3 screens
 installation size varies

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jessicameuninck.com
nathanielstern.com
info@galleryaop.com | galleryaop.com



BETWEEN



PASSING